

# DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

AUGUST 1941

DOCUMENTARY—THE CREATIVE INTERPRETATION OF REALITY

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## Propaganda Front

NOW THAT the entire world is so clearly dividing itself into two camps the time is ripe for a propaganda approach far more international in scope than has hitherto been either politic or practicable. Ranged against the Axis Powers we now have a solid bloc of freedom-loving peoples—Great Britain and her Colonies, the Dominions, Russia, China and the United States. Only a few months ago this list of names could hardly have appeared in such close association; but to-day it is a list which represents a unity in a common cause which has constructive possibilities ranging far beyond the immediate urgencies of the present conflict. Outside purely official circles it is naturally difficult to know exactly what action is being taken; but it is to be hoped that a central co-ordinating body representative of each member of the democratic front is at least in process of formation, if indeed it has not already come into being. It is of the utmost importance to have such a body, in which the policy of individual states may be freely discussed by the others, and a central drive decided on. The present world situation makes it clear that the representations of, say,

China, the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. in regard to propaganda needs and policy are indeed a *sine qua non* to the propaganda drive of Britain and her Empire—the reverse being also the case. Russia's broadcasts to Germany and to enemy-occupied countries have already taught Britain more than a few lessons—as regards ideas no less than as regards technique. China, hampered by the circumstances of a prolonged and savage war on her own soil, needs aid from the machinery and finance of other nations to find full expression. Such examples are only the most obvious; but it is abundantly clear that a central representative committee would exercise a great vivifying influence not merely on immediate wartime propaganda but on the interchange of information and ideas which alone can make—in the long run—a real and not merely theoretical thing out of internationalism. Moreover, the actions and deliberations of such a body would be a major step forward to a unanimous and far-seeing declaration of war-peace aims—a declaration which would be almost impossible for a single nation to make, but which the group already mentioned could not merely state, but also be in a position to implement.



## A Fight to a Future

WHEN Dorothy Thompson tells us that evidence that England is becoming more democratic will help to break down isolationist feeling in the United States, she is merely repeating what all competent propagandists have been saying since the beginning of the war. Yet it was good that she said it, because the point needs still to be made as widely and as frequently as possible. Apart from its effect abroad, evidence of increasing democratisation would work wonders also on our own war effort. For the fact that we now have Russia as an ally is not in itself a guarantee that British social organisation is destined to move forward rather than backward. The Ministry of Information's propaganda policy appears to have been unaffected by the new alliance and the five-minute films in particular, have deteriorated in their choice of objectives. Too high a proportion of the recent ones have been recruiting films for such organisations as the W.A.A.F., the A.T.S. and the Naval Cadets' organisation. The films have been competently made within their naïve terms of reference (which are not dissimilar from those obtaining in patent medicine advertising), but is this the right way in which to employ this precious weekly opportunity to speak for five minutes to the nation? It may be that when serious manpower shortages occur in the voluntary services a five-minute film is an appropriate remedy. But when such films follow so closely upon one another in the M.O.I.'s release schedule, it suggests not so much a widespread lack of recruits as bad production planning and an attempt to balance internal rivalries between Services clamouring for advertisement. Britain needs recruits less than she needs her cause to be made clear in the public mind.

## A Muse of Fire

A CORRESPONDENT writes: "Something is due to happen to Hollywood. For years synthetic shipwrecks, manufactured hurricanes and celluloid catastrophes have been shipped across the Atlantic. In Britain we have been regaled with a generation of Hollywood 'toughery'; the Cagneys, the Rafts, the O'Briens, in hundreds of American 'B' pictures have impressed us with that tough streak in American nature. Three years ago our small boys straightened their backs and tried to be as tough as Mickey Rooney and our youths emulated Cagney's gangster patter and Raft's stealthy strength. Three years ago Pat O'Brien in a trapped submarine symbolized the peak of human fortitude and James Cagney in a racing car, the utmost in skill and daring. The destitute family in *Grapes of Wrath* was a symbol of the suffering of common people; the journey of Stanley in darkest Africa a great feat of human endurance; the grit and courage of the pioneers in *North West Passage* a sublime stretching of the human spirit. But something is due to happen to Hollywood.

"After months of not going to a cinema, it is a shock to look Hollywood straight in the face. I heard of a man who went to the films the other night for the first time in many months. He chose *The Road to 'Frisko*. He was subjected to an hour and a half of George Raft and Humphry Bogart sweating in the trucks which grind their way over the U.S. Federal highways. Night drivers jolt over the concrete ribbon hour after

hour, living in constant danger of the horrible death which meets the driver who falls asleep. In the suburbs of a bomb-blasted town this 'toughery', this danger, meant absolutely nothing. The tough George Raft and the cunning Bogart were doing considerably less than many a City typist does on her ambulance night-shift. Compared with the task of a woman who takes the mobile canteen into the burning City of London, over a road at times hardly in existence and at other times living with fire and falling masonry, the wide U.S. Federal highway which George Raft had to negotiate was a picnic. George Raft stood in some danger of falling asleep. The little girls who drive through the blitz stand in every danger but that one. So something is due to happen to Hollywood.

"It is an endless story and its latest chapter is the *Target for Tonight* situation. There has been a long string of films about the air. Hollywood has turned them out in a number of waves since *Hell's Angels*. There have been big ones and a lot of little ones and now comes *Target for To-night*. It comes after *Test Pilot* and *I Wanted Wings* and handfuls of films about Border Patrols and Texas Rangers taking to the air. And it knocks them all for six. Everyone of the boys in *Target for To-night* has for a year been doing a job which makes the Hollywood flyers look like the circus performers they are. Here is the real thing and against this reality all the rest fades. Something is due to happen to Hollywood.

"For its own good it had better take notice of this strange new situation. More than half the world is at war. Large parts of that world are living in daily danger of death. They have learned to recognise danger and death for what it is. They meet it nightly and they realise that it is rather different from Hollywood's pictures. Those who have gone through fire recognise well the Greek fire of Hollywood. Let Hollywood learn soon enough that it may yet be hoist with its own false fire. Before long Britain will not be amused by the Hollywood puppet show, for the real actors are the people next door."

## Instruction by the Mile

FROM all quarters DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER is hearing of extraordinary ways in which training films are being used by the Services. (When they are being used at all.) There is a recent case, in which the R.A.F. approached a local educational authority and asked to use its talkie projector and the services of its operator to show some R.A.F. training films. The audience was marched in at 9.10 a.m. and the operator was handed twenty-one reels of film and asked to get through as many as possible. By 12.50 p.m., with no interval except for loading up, sixteen reels had been shown. The officer decided that there was no time for more and the R.A.F. men were taken back to their station to sit for a routine examination. In the afternoon a second group of men attended to see the remaining five reels. Being questioned upon this curious procedure, the officer said that the films must be shown in this way because they could never be obtained when they were wanted, and when they did arrive they were sent in a big batch, which it was wisest to get through as quickly as possible as they would soon have to be returned.



# DIRT FOR THE NEW BROOM

WE NOW HAVE a new Minister of Information, but at the time of writing no news is available of what changes Mr Brendan Bracken is planning to put into operation. In the meantime a good deal of advice of all descriptions has been presented to him in the columns of the Press. Nevertheless we make no apology for once more putting forward the claims of films as a propaganda weapon.

No doubt there are other departments in the M.O.I. which are more in need of the Minister's immediate attention than is the Films Division, praise for whose work was a unanimous feature of the House of Commons debate; but sooner or later he will have to consider the Films Division, and it is to be hoped that he will not do it in a spirit of complacency.

At the moment the Division is far better staffed than it was a year ago. The majority of its operative members are at least qualified by skill and experience for their jobs. But what is basically lacking—and the Director of the Films Division is the person most acutely affected by this—is that sense of direction which can only come from a basic policy to which each Ministry department can work. As it is, the Films Division has an enormous production programme; but there is a tendency for each film to be in the nature of a sporadic sortie in some direction or another, instead of being a definite move in a comprehensive strategic plan. This absence of aim affects not merely the Films Division itself but also the film-makers whom the Division employs.

When Mr Bracken investigates the propaganda film situation he will in our opinion find that it is somewhat as follows:

- (1) The Films Division has been most successful, over a period of 12 months, in home propaganda and information.
- (2) It has been least successful, over the same period, in overseas propaganda (and this includes the Empire).
- (3) It has suffered as much as it has gained by its position as agent in the making of films required by other Government departments.
- (4) It has also been the victim of a regrettable lack of co-ordination as regards the film activities of the Service Departments.
- (5) It has been handicapped by the completely false distinction drawn between "propaganda" and "cultural" films—a distinction which has caused a good deal of befuddlement as to the respective duties of the Division and of the Films Committee of the British Council.
- (6) Despite all efforts, its relations with the Film Trade have been far less harmonious than they should be, though it must be added that the Trade must take some of the blame for this situation.
- (7) Owing to the lack of directives, its policy both as regards

subject and as regards their treatment has been over-timid although some improvement has recently been discernible.

From these points it will not be difficult to draw certain conclusions and to indicate possible points for progress.

On the Home Front the success of the Films Division lies first in the achievement of a wide circulation. The Five Minute films in the theatres enable a message to be put across to the majority of the cinema-going public within four weeks of release, of which the first two weeks are probably the most important. The non-theatrical scheme is already well known as the biggest step forward in public enlightenment by means of film ever to take place in any country.

Secondly, the Films Division has had something more than a partial success with the actual production quality of its films. After a slightly sticky start the Five Minute films have reached a moderately high general standard, though it must be confessed that recent issues have shown a regrettable falling off. But, taking about 45 issues a year as the average output, it can be said that the service in general has succeeded in its purpose.

The basis of the non-theatrical scheme originally depended in some measure on the taking over of existing free libraries such as the Empire and G.P.O., and also the loan of films from outside sponsors such as the Gas and Oil interests. Production, however, has been accelerated, and a considerable variety in subject matter has been achieved. The most important films are those dealing with urgent civic problems—evacuation, health, the care of children, etc. But a lot of good work is being done in purely informative or instructional films. It is a great pity, incidentally, that no circulation figures and estimates of audiences and their reactions have yet been issued. Such figures might well prove to be sensational.

But it is also in the non-theatrical field that timidity in treatment is most glaringly obvious. A number of non-theatrical films have been handled by the Films Division for other departments—notably Food, Health, and Education; and many of these have been partially or wholly stultified by the old civil service fear of facing facts and coming into the open. Most documentary people can tell gloomy tales of shots removed, of commentaries drowned in qualifications, and even of the whole *raison d'être* of a film being removed at script or cutting stage. It is no use blaming Government Departments alone for this sort of thing. The root of the trouble is clearly that the Ministry of Information feels itself in too weak a position to take a strong line. (The M.O.I. posters are probably another indication of this; they certainly represent an all-time low-level.) In other words, the Films Division of the M.O.I. finds its powers limited simply because the Ministry as a whole has no backing, or, as Mr. Bernays put it, in the Commons debate, because there is a "divorce of power from responsibility".



It is difficult to see how the Films Division can ever become really effective until it is left to get on with its job without interference from public relations officers and other "experts" in various Government Departments. It is only fair to add that there are some signs that films sponsored direct by the Films Division for the more enlightened departments are becoming stronger and more forthright in their treatment. The pity of it is that no happier statement than this can be made after nearly two years of total war.

There is really a third category of M.O.I. films, represented by prestige documentaries, running from 2 to 4 reels in length and designed for theatrical circulation. Of these we have so far had *Squadron 992*, *Men of the Lightships*, *Merchant Seamen*, and *Target for Tonight*. All these films have been produced by the Crown Film Unit (the M.O.I.'s own unit), and have had money and time lavished on them to a far greater extent than is possible in the day-to-day hurly burly of other production sponsored by the Ministry. There have been complaints that the reservation of plum subjects and bigger finance for the Crown Unit is unfair to others; but having regard both to the results achieved and to the varied filmic demands of the Ministry, it must in the end be admitted that there is no basic objection to this policy. The real grouse amongst many units is that the finance available even in less ambitious productions is too exiguous. This is certainly a matter which calls for more investigation than it has apparently yet received.

As regards overseas propaganda the scene is one of almost unrelieved gloom, illuminated only by sporadic lightning flashes such as the sensational U.S.A. success of *London Can Take It*. In general it must be said that no serious attempts have been made to gear our film propaganda to the needs of the Dominions, the U.S.A., South America, the East, and, earlier on, those neutral countries whose demise was so largely prepared for by German propaganda work. In this connection it would be highly interesting to know what plans have been made for a full interchange of films with the U.S.S.R.

In no other field of film-work is such a vivid example of work stultified by lack of directive planning so painfully obvious as in our overseas propaganda. It is here that the clammy hands of the Foreign Office and its satellites are most in evidence. Delays and indecisions have in some cases held up special overseas films for so long that by the time they arrived at their destination they were out of date or, at best, were only of second-hand value. While it is good to hear that a film like *Target for Tonight* is flown over to New York as soon as it is ready, it must be remembered that a handful of really exciting films is not the whole story. As is pointed out on several other pages in this issue the world, whether we like it or not, is waiting for a constructive message from Britain in addition to messages about taking or giving it; and what is needed is a steady flow of films, planned and timed as a definite series, indicating our War/Peace Aims and pledging at least our own people to all those urgent measures of social reconstruction which were neglected or merely toyed with during the Armistice period of 1918-1939. This need is something which a lot of people try to deny. But however frequent or noisy their denials, it remains an urgent and utterly inescapable fact. We have mentioned it as a need for overseas propaganda; but

it is, of course, an equal need at home. There is still too much reluctance to ensure that our films express the real feelings and intentions of our people instead of the cautious and even reactionary attitude of Whitehallites who still think an ivory tower is a good defence against a panzer division. Nothing has been more remarkable than the recent efforts of some sections of officialdom to ignore the fact that the Russian alliance is wholeheartedly welcomed by most people in this country, and that this welcome has nothing to do with politics. It is a similar attitude of mind which fears films of real constructive validity in which the affairs of real people—factory workers, miners, farm-labourers and so on—are presented in the round and not in a series of patronising silhouettes.

It is said that the Prime Minister has no belief in propaganda. Mr Bracken's appointment, however, can hardly indicate a confirmation of this. He is known as a man of energy and intelligence; and we hope that he will organise all our propaganda into the major war-weapon which it should be. When the Films Division comes under his consideration he might well begin by instituting some of the reforms suggested by this article. For it would be foolish to disguise the fact that our film effort is still not working at anything like full efficiency, and that this is due not so much to the personnel but to a system which removes operative power from their hands. At a time when so much consideration is (quite rightly) being given to the question of propaganda in enemy and enemy-occupied countries, it would be unfortunate if the claims of films were to be forgotten.

We need, urgently, a really efficient overseas service, to tell the world (*not* excepting the Empire and the U.S.S.R.) not merely about our war efforts and achievements but about our plans for a constructive post-war world. We need, urgently, a fearless and well-planned series of films for the home front, which will help to clarify and bring alive the ideas and intentions of the people of Britain. We need, urgently, less red tape and its attendant inhibitions, and more courage, initiative, direct organisation, and a series of comprehensive and long-term propaganda plans on all fronts. Mr Bracken has not got to find the people to do it. They are ready to hand. All he has to do is to make the M.O.I. into a department with the power in its own, instead of other hands.

The two most immediate necessities—apart from a cleaning up of the M.O.I.'s congenital habit of muddling (e.g. the distribution fiasco over *Target for Tonight*)—are a greater humanisation of all the films and a supreme concentration on overseas circulation. By humanisation is meant not only the making of films about people rather than things, but also the presentation of people as they are, and without fear or favour. The doubts, so widely expressed recently in Parliament and Press, as to whether we are yet at our maximum effort; and the many varied reasons which have been advanced as regards these doubts, and the fact that equality of sacrifice and equality of endeavour have not yet been fully attained—all this is a jumping-off ground for a campaign in films devoted not to a description of negative attitudes, but to a picture which will encourage everyone to take part in the community effort. Such a programme if planned with vision would be of equal value at home and overseas.



# POLITICAL PROPAGANDA

We are glad to publish this article by a leading figure in the international field of commercial Public relations

THE APPOINTMENT of the new Minister of Information has done little to remove the feeling which cannot but persist in the minds of qualified thinkers that propaganda or, in its war sense, Political Warfare, is not yet fully understood in the highest Government quarters. It is therefore sincerely to be hoped that the experience and personality of the new Minister will enable him to overcome this severe handicap and that he will be able to build on such unstable foundations.

To anyone familiar with questions of propaganda it is a cast iron principle that unless the executive authority, whether it be a cabinet of Ministers or a board of directors, is absolutely convinced of the importance of propaganda there can never be a forceful, long-sighted and continuous policy. There will always be vacillation and, what is even more dangerous in propaganda—improvisation. Propaganda is not an exact science and unless there is inner conviction there can never be a policy. Yet even a wrong policy is better than vacillation, which is bad propaganda in itself.

That there should be any doubts on this subject after the ample demonstrations given by the Germans and after the experiences of the last war, is difficult to understand. One has only to look at the tremendous achievements of the Germans—involving infinitesimal losses, until the present Russian campaign—to realise the part played by propaganda in the German war machine. Practically the whole of Europe has been conquered with losses smaller than those in one major battle in the last war.

What clearly emerges is that practically all German military moves may be said to have been timed, if not dictated, by propaganda considerations, no less, and probably often more so, than by military ones.

The Russian campaign, whatever other reasons lie behind it, has undoubted propaganda motives in the reactions hoped for in the U.S.A., and in Spain; on the Vichy Government and on the hesitating Japanese Government.

Propaganda is used by the Germans to prepare and facilitate the way for military action. Conversely, the propaganda effects of military action are all carefully calculated. The German military tactics themselves have their calculated propaganda effects—intensive violence designed to create panic—deliberate action on the civilian population as demonstrated in Belgium and France to hamper the defence, etc.

Everything shows that the innermost councils in Germany are fully aware of the rôle played by propaganda in war, and this is evident in all their actions. What about ourselves, and how can our present situation be viewed? We can say that:

- (a) Except for our Russian allies we are not in contact with the enemy on a large military scale.
- (b) Millions of our allies are oppressed by the enemy.
- (c) Many of the enemy himself, among them certainly millions of Italians, are dissatisfied.
- (d) We have to persuade the vast resources of the New

World to come all-out to our assistance in the face of German propaganda.

It follows, from these facts, that our own contact with the enemy may be said to lie largely in the field of propaganda. Is it then so surprising for it to be suggested that propaganda should be handled from within the War Cabinet? Is it so unreasonable to reply to the query as to why the Propaganda Minister should be better situated in this respect than the Service Ministers, by stating that propaganda is of the essence of modern warfare: that this war is essentially a war of ideas, a war of whole peoples and of their conception of living; that military action to-day, is only one form of warfare, however vital and indispensable it may be.

Propaganda lies at the roots of the wider conceptions of our war effort. It is not merely a weapon for influencing opinion. It also has a directive function wherein lies the strategy of propaganda, and it is this function which does not appear to be generally understood. No Propaganda Minister can do justice to his job if he is confined to the carrying out of the War Cabinet's policy: in other words, to directing the mechanics of propaganda. He must play a vital part in the shaping of the policy itself.

He, it is, who must sense and advise on the trends of opinion all over the world and on the quality of the morale—both our own and that of the enemy. He, it is, who must anticipate the enemy's propaganda, and the propaganda effects of the enemy's military or political activities.

It is his responsibility to build up opinion with ultimate objects in view, be they military or political, and not merely to exploit day-to-day situations. He must, where necessary, be able to create situations. This means, in effect, that he must be in a position to have his say in military and diplomatic affairs. Conversely, he must be in a position to assess and comment on proposed military or diplomatic action.

Briefly, the Propaganda Minister cannot fulfill his functions unless he is intimately concerned with the shaping of our grand strategy. No man can make a greater contribution to the shaping of this strategy if we accept, as accept we must, that this is a war of ideas and ideals—in other words, of human emotions and reactions.

Three points concerned with propaganda, and about which there is a good deal of loose thinking, will help to illuminate the problem.

The first of these is the expert handling of propaganda. As it is not an exact science, practically everyone has his own ideas on the subject and is prepared to hold forth on them. Yet the practice of propaganda presupposes a very wide knowledge of human nature; of human reactions; of the standards of education in different countries; of differences in mentality between different nations or between different sub-divisions of the same nation; of the various and numerous channels of propaganda and their possibilities and effectiveness



under different circumstances; of the reactions of different classes and different races to the various forms of propaganda, and so on. It is, in fact, a vast subject on which there are not many authorities.

The Americans, for instance, are already claiming that when they come into the war they will teach us how to do propaganda. That may be so, but the Americans do not, and cannot, know the psychology of Europeans as we ought to know it. They are certainly well versed in the technique of propaganda; but knowledge in this field is not lacking in this country, even if it is not being used to the best advantage.

One of the weaknesses of the M.O.I. is probably the lack of direct and close contact between the directive power and the available expert knowledge. The higher ranks of the Ministry have little experience in propaganda and this, incidentally, may have been one explanation of their inability to have forced drastic improvements in the situation.

The second point is that of the Truth in propaganda. The truth, as such, is not necessarily a dynamic force. It is, moreover, not necessarily recognisable at first sight. It requires a background—in other words it is necessary to build up a repu-

tation for telling the truth before statements will be accepted as the truth. Even so they are seldom accepted absolutely. The truth must be timed so as to achieve the maximum propaganda effect, and it must be followed up. It will, no doubt, be very satisfactory to be able to say, after we have won the war, that we spoke the truth and nothing but the unadorned truth; but in the meantime we have still to win the war and we must clearly use the truth in our propaganda to the best advantage.

Finally, there is the question of the relationship between news and risk. Statements are constantly made that the issue of news must under no circumstances ever endanger the life of a single combatant. This, perhaps more than anything else, shows the lack of comprehension of the scope and importance of propaganda in this war. No one wants to sacrifice lives unnecessarily, but surely our fighting forces and our civilians have shown that they are prepared to risk, nay, to give, their lives to bring victory nearer. If the issue of an item of news is calculated to influence American opinion or give encouragement to the oppressed, or help to undermine the morale of the enemy—in fact, help to bring the end of the war nearer—surely the risk then is one which will be gladly undertaken by all concerned.

## THE COMMONS DEBATE

Few people get a chance to read "Hansard", and we are therefore reprinting, by permission of the Controller of H.M.S.O., extracts from various speeches made during the Commons Debate on Propaganda, July 3rd, 1941

**Sir John Anderson** (The Lord President of the Council): There are some who would wish to see all the staff and all the machinery for publicity, information and propaganda taken away from the various departments and collected together into a single Ministry, which would perform all the information and propaganda services of the Government under a Minister clothed with supreme powers in that field, subject only to the direction of the War Cabinet. Such a scheme might seem attractive at first sight, because of the simplicity of the conception.

**Mr. Gallacher** (Fife, West): And because it is sensible.

**Sir John Anderson**: But it would not be either sensible or a practicable scheme. If propaganda is of such far-reaching importance as we believe it to be, how can it be dealt with as an entirely separate subject, in isolation from foreign policy, defence and the other multifarious activities of the State?

**Sir John Anderson**: By comparison with the Nazi machine, our efforts in this sphere may often seem puny and half-hearted. But we have those powerful allies, truth and fair dealing, for which the psychology of fear is no match.

**Mr. Bernays** (Bristol, North): The main point at issue is that what we dislike in the organisation of the Ministry of Information is the divorce of power from responsibility.

**Mr. Bernays**: The blunt fact is surely that the Ministry of Information lacks self-confidence, and that it lacks public confidence. It lacks self-confidence, I suggest, because its functions are so limited; it lacks public confidence because it has not got sufficient authority. The position is worse now, after the Government statement, than it was before. The battle has been joined, and the battle has been lost. The Service Ministers are confirmed in their position of control; the Foreign Office is stronger, not weaker. There is to be no propaganda, as far as I can understand it, without the consent of somebody else. I know that scorn has been poured on the Ministry of Information. I think it has done some things very well. I think its film service is excellent.

**Mr. Gammans** (Hornsey): The War Cabinet have to lay it down that they will regard propaganda as a potent weapon of war and that they expect that weapon to be waged with as much ruthlessness, vigour and vision as they expect from any other weapon. When that is done, then, I think, it

will be fair to judge the results. As far as I am aware, there are only five weapons in our hands with which to beat Germany—the Navy, the Army, the Air Force, the Economic Blockade and Propaganda.

**Wing-Commander James** (Wellingborough): The British Council must not be in any way placed under the Ministry of Information. It has an independent non-party governing body. Another reason it should not be under the Ministry of Information is that one sincerely hopes the Ministry will cease to exist as soon as the war is over, if not before; whereas one hopes that the British Council will continue to carry out its very valuable world-wide work for many years to come.

**Mr. G. Strauss** (Lambeth, North): I maintain that the Foreign Office, with its traditions, its peculiar type of personnel, its traditional outlook and its recent record, is the last body that should be in charge of our foreign propaganda service.

I have a great respect for the Civil Service in all Departments, but I should have thought that there was general agreement that those members of it working in the Foreign Office are, by the very nature of their training, apt to be old-fashioned and rigid in outlook, least conscious of modern social trends, and least aware of the outlook of the common people and of the labour movement in all parts of the world. I should have thought, moreover, that there would also have been general agreement that our propaganda, to be effective, must be aimed at the masses of the people and not at the diplomatists, the aristocracies, or the upper middle classes of the people of Europe. It must be based on an appeal to the masses of the population of Europe, and the people who are going to direct that propaganda should have an understanding of the aspirations of the ordinary man. The Foreign Office are the last people to be in charge of such propaganda.

**Mr. Noel-Baker** (Derby): Small successes over censorship, films and regional committees will not help us, and the compromises announced by the Lord President hardly help at all. The fact that it was the President himself who announced the changes is symptomatic of what is wrong. The Government ought to make a real Ministry of Information, with real authority and real power, and close the doors of the unhappy institution that we have to-day. Why do they not do it? Some people say it is because the Prime Minister does not really care about propaganda. He wants deeds, not words. I ask, can such an incredible paradox really be true?



## NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

**When the Pie was Opened.** Production: Realist Film Unit. Direction: Len Lye. Sound: Ernst Meyer. Camera: A. E. Jenkins. 8 minutes.

THERE HAS always been a certain amount of doubt as to how detailed a cooking recipe could be taught by film. It can hardly be expected that after a single viewing of a film the complete method of preparing a complex dish will remain in the minds of an average audience. Yet at least one person, after seeing *When the Pie was Opened* maintained that he could remember exactly how to make the vegetable pie which it describes. He is probably a rare case but one certain thing is that everyone will remember that a vegetable pie can be made simply and that it has pleasant associations. Perhaps no cooking film should be asked to do more. The film does, however, go a long way beyond vegetable pies. Len Lye is a director who cannot help communicating through his films a warm, friendly and imaginatively lively personality. Here he cannot resist a variety of technical tricks which present the vegetable pie via the old jingle about "When the pie was opened the birds began to sing". A child is thinking of the delights of eating pie in these terms and we see her imaginative reconstruction of a pie with living blackbirds while Louis Armstrong, playing "Solitude", reveals a second aspect of the child's abstracted mood. This short sequence has something worth-while to say about child psychology and a parent's understanding of it. Mood has never been communicated through the screen so economically. Towards the end of the film Len Lye becomes gayer and uses unexpected sound effects for simple culinary operations, in the most chaotic fashion. It is just good exuberant fun and few audiences will resist it. When the pie-crust is being cut we hear the sound of sawing wood, and a train starts up as the pie is being ceremoniously conveyed to the dining table. These and many other tricks bring the film to a rousing finish. It is the gayest short for many a long day—and from the Ministry of Information too! Thank you Gentlemen.

**Lady be Kind.** Direction: Rodney Ackland. Script: Rodney Ackland and Arthur Boys. M. of I. 5 minutes.

THE PURPOSE OF *Lady be Kind* is to persuade housewives who have taken in war-work lodgers to treat them kindly and with consideration. Our hero is working on night shift and comes home soaking wet to find breakfast finished and cold, himself ignored and hustled by the family, his landlady (Muriel George, of course) unwilling to dry his clothes, and the wireless at full blast when he wants to sleep. To cap it all he has written home moaning to his wife, and her letter to him, calling his landlady "Mrs Hitler" has naturally been read by the landlady. Luckily a few words with the next-door housewife, who treats her lodger well and realises war work is

almost as important as being in uniform, smooths things over. We end with the lodger fetching the coals, and the landlady giving him nice hot meals and singing like a bird.

Now this sort of pseudo-realistic stuff is extremely ticklish to do well, and I'm afraid the resources of the British theatre and studios are quite unable to cope with it. It needs the technique of a John Baxter, or of *They also Serve*. The first necessity is some first-hand knowledge and understanding of the people it is supposed to be about, and the second, some sort of sympathy with them. Unfortunately, the rich variety and colour of working-class life is right outside the range of the simple black-and-white equipment of the ordinary professional actor or director. With lack of understanding vanishes any possibility of sympathy, and the result is an overwhelming impression of condescension and unconcealed contempt. The propaganda points are flung in your face with a contemptuous take-it-or-leave-it air.

If you can't believe in the people, you can't believe in the propaganda; thus the whole effect of this film is one of emptiness and depression. I should hate to think the film really represented anybody's view of life. He would be unutterably miserable. The hero looks a first-class misery throughout: from his long-suffering air and the finicky way he pecks at his food he's obviously got stomach trouble, probably an ulcer. His landlady's grouse seems to be that he doesn't appear anxious to, or capable of fulfilling the duties expected of a night-shift lodger, and I don't mean carrying coals. Technically the film is efficiently made, with the exception of some barrack-like sets and the distracting and unpleasant habit of running music over scenes with natural sound. All in all, it is a most depressing film: if this is the best they can do, the M. of I. had much better lay off this would-be working-class stuff and stick to the great and glorious middle classes they know so well.

**Target for Tonight.** Production: Crown Film Unit. Producer: Ian Dalrymple. Direction: Harry Watt. Camera: Jonah Jones. Edited by: S. McAllister. Sound Recorded by: Ken Cameron. 50 minutes.

By an R.A.F. Officer:

Mr Harry Watt has had to illustrate the bleakest and most unpleasant text that can be imagined, the daily communique of operations by the Bomber Command of the Royal Air Force. "Aircraft of the Bomber Command last night attacked industrial objectives at Freidhausen. Fires were started and heavy high explosive bombs were seen to burst on the target"—good news in a sense, but very far from dramatic—a mere announcement that the endless belt which carries bombs to Germany is still at work. But, after all, it is the job of documentary films to illuminate these mechanical and repetitive processes; the film can do far more than any

writer, as Mr Watt has certainly done in this instance, with such refractory material.

Firstly, Mr Watt has accepted the limitations of his subject. His film does not pretend to describe any exceptional adventure; at the end, as the details of the night's work are wiped from the blackboard in the operations room, we know that it is all to be done again on the next night and done in the same way. But all the more significant, within these limitations, are the glimpses of character, the unemphatic courage, the mere hint of implacable resolution, the mere symptoms of elaborate organisation, which the film reveals.

Everything is in order, though first there is the Wellington in the air to remind the audience of the essential in a mass of detail. The photographers annotate the target, the Air Staff decide when, how, and with what strength it is to be attacked, a mild civilian looks at the weather, an energetic Station Commander extracts information from his intelligence officers, the crews casually accept the instructions of the experts, the mechanics get the aircraft ready, the crews put on their flying kit, and the night begins. And so do the moments of emotion in the film.

The camera is used as a most flexible instrument, recording every mood so well that one hardly feels the need of speech. The pilot's face lit by the flash of an anti-aircraft shell, the long procession of cloudscapes which so skilfully suggest the long voyage to Germany, the anxious silhouettes of station and squadron commanders waiting in the mist for a late bomber to return—these require no commentary to drive their meaning home. But elsewhere speech is almost as illuminating and there is something almost uncanny in Mr Watt's art of turning everyone into a master of highly realistic acting. He does it, of course, by recording single sentences at a time. The actor, camera-shy and painfully self-conscious at first before a battery of arc lamps, unfamiliar instruments, and improbable strangers, repeats the same few words until he is so bored by them that he says them naturally; then Mr Watt has him snapped. The result is to outdo almost any experienced acting; in fact the man who does well in the studio from the beginning is not so convincing in the end as the man who fumbles at first, gets all his words wrong, and is miserable because he thinks he is holding up the whole film. With such a power of making life do as well as art, Mr Watt can choose his types with an entire freedom; he has only got to see a very Scots Scotsman, hear a characteristic Oxford accent, or observe the impressive gestures of a senior officer, and he has got them for his film.

The film is made as though it was merely intended as a documentary record; it is for this very reason that it is magnificent propaganda for the British cause. Rather puzzling perhaps, in Vladivostok or Yucatan, to see how startlingly native and even provincial the English manage to remain in the centre of the world's stage, but





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## NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

(continued from p. 147)

all the more, if these exotic audiences should reflect, an effective symbol of resistance to a hostile continent.

**Airwoman.** Production: G.-B. Screen Services. Direction: Francis Searle. Camera: Roy Fogwill. M.O.I. 5 minutes.

IF ANY girl looking for war work has the idea that joining one of the Services is not for her but for "the other woman", *Airwoman* is the film to make her change her mind. Instead of merely a tedious exposition of the different jobs done by the W.A.A.F., this film shows the purpose behind them and gives something of the spirit of the thing, which is much more likely to gain recruits and fire a girl's enthusiasm.

The film moves fast and tells, in an exciting and dramatic way, the organisation of a night raid by our bombers, and shows how vital to success are the parts played by the various sections of the W.A.A.F. behind the scenes, whether it is in the Intelligence Department or serving the boys with fish and chips, when they return.

Personally, I feel that, like the bombers it depicts, this film will reach its objective and achieve its purpose more surely than all the "Go to Its" and pointing fingers in the newspapers: in fact, if I see *Airwoman* again just before registering at an Employment Exchange the W.A.A.F. will gain another recruit.

**Living with Strangers.** Production: Realist Film Unit Ltd. Producer: John Taylor. Direction: Frank Sainsbury. Non-T. 11 minutes.

A FILM about one of evacuation's most acute problems—the conflicts and quarrels that arise between London and country women sharing the same house and the same kitchen.

The film shows some trivial disagreement causing a flare-up between two women, and being settled by the harassed but still patient billeting officer. It then goes on to show how in one village the provision of facilities for communal cooking, eating, washing, and reception of visitors has gone a long way towards stabilising evacuation and offers this as a solution to this serious problem.

The film has a message and gives it clearly—which, when you think about it, is what it was supposed to do. So on that all-important count Sainsbury and his co-workers merit full marks. Individuals will always differ about methods of treatment—and it is here that mild protest seems justified. The film smacks too much of a documentary hang-over from orgies of several years ago. It is flat, unimaginative and unhuman in presentation, which again, when you think about it, also counts when assessing the work of the film makers.

**Al at Lloyd's.** A Strand Film Production for the British Council. Production: Alex Shaw. Direction: Ralph Bond. Camera: Jo Jago. Script: Reg Groves. Commentator: Leslie Mitchell. Music: John Greenwood. 9 minutes.

LATEST addition to the British Council series is *Al at Lloyd's*, a film which may prove more provocative than the previous productions.

Like *Ulster*, it is made in the British Council tradition of foisting on to the public, the truly British, old-school-tie, hats-off-to-Big-Business outlook.

Interwoven in the film is a deal of factual material and an interesting story of the work which Lloyd's is doing. The theme centres around the ship, *Armadillo*, with glimpses of its construction and classification into a definite category of sea-worthiness and workmanship demanded for vessels registered by Lloyd's. Here is one example (i.e. the establishment of a certain standard in design and construction) of the useful services which the Lloyd's organisation inevitably renders. In contrast to the maritime poker played backstage, there is an obvious residue of invaluable work which this wide organisation performs. A network of coastal stations, telegraph-lines and scattered officials follow the ship during its journey from Valparaiso, plotting a course and checking with a schedule. The presence of enemy vessels necessitates absolute secrecy in the course the ship is to follow, and for several days nobody is aware of the vessel's position. Caught in a storm and unable to use wireless communication, notice of the delay is cabled to London, and then the business men go into action. Contrasted with the sailors, who are not merely doing a real job of work but also risking their lives in doing so, the top-hats appear funereal and impotent.

But the *Armadillo* has been classified A1 and is able to justify British workmanship and seamanship; to shake off the storm, and arrive back in port. The film ends with a sentimental, rhymed eulogy on ships spoken in the Masfield tradition, which succeeds as an antidote to the previous revelations of the insurance world. One is left with vivid memories of John Greenwood's music and some well-shot storm scenes.

**The White Eagle.** Production: Concanen Films. Producer: Derrick de Marney. Direction: Eugene Cekalski. Commentary: Spoken by Leslie Howard.

IT IS hard for British people to understand quite what this war means to continental nations whose country is still being ravaged in battle. For hundreds of years no British home has come under the heel of an invader. Consequently, perhaps we find tolerance comes to us with more ease than to a continental people.

Poland, one feels, has always had hates. She has had to struggle so much through the centuries to preserve her independence against her two huge neighbours, that hate became an official instrument in welding together the different sections of the nation. It is encouraging, therefore, to find a more constructive attitude emerging from the latest official Polish film.

This shows the life of Poland in exile in the British Isles, and the various steps she has been able to take to preserve the culture of her people. It is these threads, and the symbol of Polish youth in "Andrew"—a Boy Scout, which keep the film together.

Leslie Howard accompanies the picture pleasantly enough, speaking Val Gielgud's harmless, if verbose, commentary. A reconstructed radio-broadcast to occupied Poland, which,

since it was written by a Pole, one can only assume to represent the official attitude, struck a false and damaging note with its archaic "an eye for an eye".

Credit must go to the director, Eugene Cekalski, for having got so much humanity into his subject in spite of the difficulties—and they must have been considerable—with which he had to contend. To make a film in a foreign country for a nation other than one's own argues a ready talent. And, *The White Eagle*, by its calm development and glimpses of a desire for co-operation, puts Poland's case with considerably more force than is evident in more political mediums.

**Sea Cadets.** A Jay Gardner Lewis Production. Photography: Charles Marlborough. M.O.I. 5 minutes.

THERE IS a picture which hangs in nearly every boys' school, called the "Boyhood of Raleigh". An Elizabethan seaman sits on a Devon shore pointing out to sea, and telling two wistful lads of the adventures that lie beyond the horizon. Now, a bluejacket sits in a suburban garden and tells two modern lads about life in the Sea Cadets, with special emphasis on the signalling side. He is one up on the Elizabethan, who could not dissolve away into illustrations of what he was talking about. But he misses the horizon, the richer implications, the sense of comradeship and adventure.

There seems to be a danger of five minute films, or at least the recruiting ones, becoming reduced to a formula—three or four people chatting in a pub or a backyard, used as a springboard for a brochure on the particular service being advertised. The fault lies probably more with the production policy than with the technician. Another part of the formula seems to be Bernard Miles who is rapidly becoming the Typical British Serviceman with a character wardrobe like that of royalty. Why turn a good artist into a Protean act?

**India Marches.** Production: Bombay Talkies. M.O.I. 5 minutes.

COMES the dawn. A bugler blows reveille, a flag waves at a masthead. The troops march; rifle practice, machine gun practice, bayonet practice. The troops play football, netball, hockey. They might be from Lancashire or from Toronto or New South Wales; only the background, the uniforms, and the colour of their faces is different. Moslems, Hindus and Christians, it seems, can unite in the defence of freedom and democracy, even though it is claimed that they would immediately start killing each other if they were given the said freedom and democracy. Technically, the film is adequate, but does it tell us anything which is not true of any regiment, that we could not guess for ourselves?

The only time it livens up is where the troops perform one of their own dances, where we see something peculiarly Indian. After all, there are 500 million people in the British Empire; only 48 million of them live in Britain. Nearly three-quarters of the rest live in India. We can take for granted that they march and drill much as we do. Let's see how they live.



# DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

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# THE WAR AND FILM PROPAGANDA

By JOSEPH REEVES

Secretary-Manager, Workers Film Association Ltd.

MANY HAVE COMPLAINED about the lack of policy and planning in the subject matter of the Ministry of Information films. The complaints have been fully justified. Some films are excellent, but they appear to happen more by accident than by design. If one were to be asked what purpose they served it would be very difficult for a rational reply to be given. "Propaganda by film is considered to be the proper thing, so let's have some films" appears to be the only prompting behind the series of films issued by the Ministry during these last few months.

Unless film propaganda is part of a well-considered plan of propaganda, it is bound to hop from subject to subject without continuity of direction and consistency of purpose. A study of the films issued by the Films Division of the Ministry reveals weaknesses in national policy. If we wish to find the cause of this lamentable impotence in propaganda, we must look to higher quarters for an explanation, for the Films Division is a section of a Government Department which in turn is dependent upon instructions received from the War Cabinet.

To understand why public opinion, regardless of party, is so dissatisfied with the Ministry, it is necessary to discover what the Government hopes to achieve by its propaganda ministry. A perusal of the recent debate on this subject in Parliament gives one all the information one needs to come to the sad conclusion that the Government itself fails adequately to appraise propaganda as a weapon of warfare and to give those who direct our propaganda the necessary lead, so that it may become virile and forthright, constructive and consistent and, above all, effective. If propaganda policy is not brilliantly conceived, it can easily do far more harm than good. Our broadcasts to America and to the Soviet Union, for instance, could be expressed on such narrow lines that it would be better to remain silent.

The debate dealt with two main issues, the place of propaganda in the national war effort and the relationship of the Ministry to the Foreign Office and the Service Departments. It was a revelation on how not to use a weapon unless the purpose for which it is being used is thoroughly comprehended.

The inexcusable decision to make the Minister of Information the office boy of the Foreign Office is to relegate him to a position of inferiority which no self-respecting Minister would tolerate but for the demands on loyalty which the war has occasioned. The Minister becomes, at best, a publicity consultant and, at worst, the mouth-piece of a Ministry whose technique of diplomacy is as far removed as possible from that of propaganda.

The contention made by Sir John Anderson

that the Foreign Office speaks the mind of the War Cabinet may be quite correct theoretically and constitutionally, but in practice it has been found to speak, on far too many occasions, with the voice of appeasement and reaction. Thus any proposal to put across forthright propaganda on the social and economic prospects implicit in our democratic way of life is taboo, as it is thought it might upset those in other countries who do not share such views.

Moreover, it is surely humiliating for a Minister to receive directions from the War Cabinet upon which he does not serve, through another Minister. For this there is no parallel in British constitutional and political history. It is making a Cinderella of a ministry and a make-shift of propaganda.

Again, why have the prospective benefits of a specially organised Ministry of Information—with the advantages of centralised direction and drive—been ignored in favour of the Public Relations Departments of individual Government Departments functioning separately? Such a multiplicity of publicity activities is bound to achieve confusion and overlapping. These Departments, seeking ever to justify themselves, will strain every nerve to place their own Ministries on the map and to demonstrate that they can do their own publicity far better than any Ministry of Information. A great Departmental Store organising its publicity this way would be asking for trouble. The status of the Ministry of Information is all important. Whilst it is compelled to accept instructions from other Ministries it will remain impotent, as it will neither represent Government policy nor will it be able to develop a policy of its own.

This country has never been very clever at publicising itself, neither has it had in recent years an aptitude for defining policy. That is why we love our Churchill; he expresses our thoughts. But Churchill, be he never so brilliant, cannot run the war alone, and both he and we must rely upon a team of leaders.

The directives which the American people receive from their President express clearly the policy of a nation for all to understand. They take the American people step by step towards their destined place in world affairs.

Our propaganda serves no such end. It leads us nowhere. It emphasises victory but does not say for what. It tells the world that we defend a Christian civilisation and the democratic way of life from the attacks of the barbarians, as if our country represented the best of all possible worlds. Everyone knows it does not. What people want to know is—whither Britain?

The decision to leave war news in the hands of the Service Departments, with hardly any real change of procedure, is another indefensible



arrangement. To say that it has worked well in the past is to mock at public intelligence. At times, the whole world, including Germany, has known of certain events of first-class importance; we have been the only people to be kept in ignorance. If the withholding of information had only occurred occasionally, one would not feel justified in complaining, but it has occurred constantly since the war commenced. This anomaly discredits the Ministry of Information in all its activities.

When the *London Times* and the *Daily Herald*—extremes in the political press of the country—agree on condemning all these limitations on the propaganda work of the country, public opinion, as represented by the Press, becomes significantly unanimous. It is for the War Cabinet to try again, because this is not *their* war but a people's war, and if we lose it will be the people who will pay the price.

The most our propaganda has said so far, apart from the speeches of Lord Halifax and the Foreign Secretary, is that our war aim is to "win it". This rather pig-headed single-mindedness may appear to some to show to the world a nation totally organised for one purpose, and one purpose only. To others, it shows a complete lack of understanding of the revolutionary processes at work in human society of which the war is only one of many manifestations.

This war aim, if exclusive of all others, may land us in chaos at the end of the war—a chaos from which we shall find it hard, through lack of adequate planning, to extricate ourselves.

Men and women are fighting in this war for what it means to them in terms of enhanced human values in the post-war world. If they fight for that which is best in our Western Civilisation (which, by the way, does not exclude what Germany has contributed) it is not so much for what it is and has been, but for the things of which it is capable. Unless wars can in future be avoided, unless economic rivalries can be banished from the face of the earth, unless the free peoples of the earth can resolve their differences by peaceful means, then the sacrifices made to-day will have been in vain. Our propaganda must take cognizance of this.

Further, as the war proceeds on its course, we are presented with new and dramatic events of which the latest and most dramatic was the forced entry into the war of the Soviet Union. A well organised and independently managed Ministry of Information, receiving instructions from one body only, namely the War Cabinet, is necessary to make adjustments, in propaganda terms, to these new horizons.

The foregoing may seem a far cry from film propaganda, but in fact it explains why much film propaganda has been so ineffective in spite of the many good films produced. There are certain serious omissions in our film propaganda for which the Ministry itself must accept responsibility. The working people of this country are the largest section of the British public, and it is they who have not had a square deal.

As the war proceeds and success follows failure, and failure, success, efforts are made to influence public opinion so that it remains constant in its resolve that the war must be fought

to a successful conclusion. Is it succeeding in its object? In my view, the film is being used in no serious manner to show why we are defending, with all we have, our democratic way of life, or to convince the great company of cinema-goers of the mighty contribution the workers of this country are making to the national war effort. A careful inspection of the programme of films issued by the Ministry of Information shows that those who direct the policy of the Ministry are either unaware of, or unwilling to accept, the idea that we are fighting this war to preserve democracy for what it means in terms of progressive social betterment.

I have no doubt that this aspect of the struggle has been put into the background on account of the political truce. The progressive elements in the Government are there because they believe that our democratic system provides the means of giving the people, at a not-too-distant date, economic security and social justice. To them Hitler's "New Order", in spite of its alleged social achievements, can never be an alternative to a system in which social adjustments are made voluntarily by a people possessing as large a measure of freedom as a highly complex system of society makes possible. On the other hand, the conservative elements in the government, which of course strongly preponderate, mean to preserve our present empire and its institutions in their present forms, and they do not contemplate any alteration in our national life which would change the present class divisions. This paralyses governmental policy. In the final analysis, the two main elements in the government are fighting for totally different things.

Thus the films cannot show that in our fight for democracy we are aiming at ensuring a period of uninterrupted progress, in the years ahead, towards the ideal of government of the people by the people, for the people, in all aspects of our national life, not excluding the economic side. And yet, if that could be done, the response of the people would be immediate and sustained.

The people hope vaguely that this is implied in the struggle, but their doubts would be completely dispelled if we could only state boldly and unequivocally that the fight for man's heritage involves no bar to his basic social and economic right to absolute equality with his fellows. Such an appeal—for appeal it would be—would be the greatest of all counterstrokes to Hitler's "New Order", and would inspire the masses, not only in this country but in occupied countries, to contribute their maximum effort towards the overthrow of the world's most dangerous tyrant.

The Ministry has not used the film to show how democracy, the right of free speech, the right of assembly, the right to organise for social and political purposes, has provided a highway to a new world. The result is that the greatest stimulation which could be given to the public in our war effort is not employed. Also, no attempt has been made seriously to portray the past achievements of democracy, which are not inconsiderable. Lastly, and most lamentably, no recognition has been given to the common man in the field, workshop and factory. He and his family are the

very basis of modern society. Without him, we could not wage war. We are realising, more and more, that the man in the factory and on the land, the transport worker, the merchant seaman—in other words, the worker—is as essential as the soldier, sailor and airman to our war effort, and on account of the nature of modern war he is in as much danger from death and wounds as his service brother. There is no glamour for him. He has long and tedious hours of hard work, having lost many of the amenities which he had obtained after years of struggle, and although the insecurity of peace times is more or less absent, he contemplates the peace with some misgivings, for, if the last war is a criterion, he may again have to face years of unemployment.

He sees no film on his achievements. No attempt is made to credit him with offering his all in the interests of military success, and yet that is what he is literally doing. Up till now, every advance made in wages, hours of work and the provision of social services has been made because he has organised and struggled for its realisation. He has obtained nothing because he had a right to it. The recent vote at the annual meeting of the Amalgamated Engineering Union shows how the workers are reacting to the present situation. They are becoming disgruntled. They are being thus affected because we have ignored the need of keeping them informed on the great purposes for which the nation is fighting; but, even more, because we have omitted to do justice to the mighty work they are doing in so many walks of life. They want no films of the patronising type of *Welfare of the Workers*; or the unrealistic nonsense of *A Call to Arms*; they want films related to their lives and their aspirations.

The British Council films suffer from the serious fault of most official films. A writer in the *Times* states that the aim of British Council films is "to hold the mirror to the face of Britain and her people in their everyday life and work and so expose the pretence that the 'new order' would bring to Europe social and educational blessings unknown to these islands". If that is the aim, then in my view the films fall short in every aspect of their purpose. They provide no inspiration, neither do they depict the lives of the common people. They are far too high-falutin'. If we ignore the common man in this testing time, we do so at our peril. He is the linchpin of our war effort. Upon him depends the success or failure of our national effort.

Lord Halifax and Mr. Anthony Eden have indicated that the world of the future cannot be the same as the pre-war world. Mr. Eden has said that man is entitled to economic security. If this is really the policy of the Government, why not make the most of it? Economic security involves the principle of social justice. This is a great principle and a mighty advance on anything recognised in official circles before. Put this conception on the screen in the many forms it can assume. It will inspire, as no other idea can. Our New Order, unlike Hitler's, is really new and arises out of one of the most recent experiments man has undertaken in ordering his collective life. We can beat Hitler at his own game, because ours is a much better game.



# FILM SOCIETY NOTES

## FREEDOM OF THE FILM

D.N.L. reprints a speech by the late Dr Everett Dean Martin, former Chairman of the National Board of Review of the U.S.A., which admirably defines a public issue that is always to the forefront in Film Society and similar activities.

"Society to-day is overcrowded with little people who have more zeal than tolerance, whose chief interest seems to be in forcing their neighbours to give up the things they really like and accept another man's standards of taste.

"Something of the spirit of the forum is essential, I think, to the successful democratic solution of this as of every other public problem. People respond best to ideals when they are permitted to feel they can contribute something on their own account. An extended and very close association with popular assemblies has convinced me that the coercive method is worse than a failure. People's opinions, their likes and dislikes, are in no way changed by having standards forced on them from without. Any attempt to regulate popular amusements by law—beyond the protection of common decency, which is everywhere a regular police function—always results in resentment, furtiveness, hypocrisy, increased social unrest, the lending of colour to the statements of those agitators who say that this is no longer a free land. And what is more, such attempts always destroy personal responsibility. Individuals under such a regime naturally feel that

standards are set for them by someone else and consequently must be all right. The bureaucratic body to which such responsibility is transferred falls back upon an arbitrary and unreasoning formalism which kills both art and morals and soon becomes only the tool for political ends.

"It has been said that a legal censorship would be a blow at civil liberty quite as serious and of the same nature as a permanent censorship of the press. To my mind this is true. If the American people surrender the free theatre, they might as well give up free press, free speech, freedom of assemblage. They will encourage a species of legislation which in the end will destroy the last vestige of personal responsibility. Freedom along any of these lines is liable to abuse, and those who publish, speak, or produce must be held responsible. But it is one thing to hold an agent responsible for these abuses. It is a very different thing to try to prevent all danger of such abuses beforehand by handing over both freedom and responsibility to a petty officialdom. This latter is absolutely out of harmony with American ideals and traditions. It is rank Prussianism,

the very thing which we went to war to drive out of the earth.

"There is no greater menace to the manhood and womanhood of this land than the growing tendency to treat everyone as if he were either a moral pervert or a kindergarten child who needed constant protection against himself. Surely, with all the safeguards we now have, people must be trusted in some measure to have an hour of amusement after their work, free from the meddlesome interference of bureaux, secret agents, autocrats, censors and official regulators.

"The National Board of Review will do its utmost to help save the theatre-going public from this most autocratic form of Prussianism, while at the same time lending its aid and counsel to every effort made in the direction of higher artistic development. It is not bureaucracy which will eradicate the evils of the motion picture but a finer sense of artistic values, and these two are mutually exclusive. I trust that in this work the National Board will continue to enjoy, as it has in the past, the confidence and co-operation of both the producers and the public."

*Note: The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures is a citizen body, organised in 1909 by the People's Institute of New York City as a medium for reflecting intelligent public opinion regarding a growing art and entertainment. This is still the Board's function, together with that of disseminating information on the subject of motion pictures and carrying on a constructive programme having to do with community co-operation in the advancement and uses of the motion picture.*

# SHORT FILM BOOKINGS FOR AUGUST

(The following bookings for August are selected from a list covering its Members, supplied by The News and Specialised Theatres Association)

	Week ending		Week ending		Week ending
Alex in Wonderland		Magician Mickey		Stranger than Fiction—No. 78	
The News Theatre, Leeds	Sept. 6th	The News Theatre, Leeds	Aug. 23rd	The News Cinema, Aberdeen	Aug. 23rd
All in a Day's Work		Malta		Stranger than Fiction—No. 80	
The News Theatre, Newcastle	Aug. 23rd	The News Theatre, Bristol	30th	The News Cinema, Aberdeen	16th
Acquitted by the Sea		Many Waters		Swing with Bing	
The News Theatre, Manchester	30th	The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	16th	The News Theatre, Bristol	Sept. 6th
Ball Clay		Marine Round-Up		Tattle Television	
The News Theatre, Manchester	Sept. 6th	The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	30th	The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	6th
Calling on Columbia		The News Theatre, Leeds	23rd	Temples of India	
The News Theatre, Leeds	6th	March of Time of the Year—No. 1		The News Cinema, Aberdeen	6th
The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	6th	The News Theatre, Newcastle	30th	The Constable	
Close to Earth		March of Time No. 1—7th Year		The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	Aug. 30th
The News Theatre, Leeds	6th	The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	30th	The Drum	
Donald Duck		Meet Your Children		The Tatler Theatre, Chester	23rd
The News Cinema, Aberdeen	Aug. 23rd	The News Cinema, Aberdeen	23rd	The Fire Chief	
" " "	30th	Mickey Mouse		The Tatler Theatre, Chester	16th
Dreams		The News Cinema, Aberdeen	16th	The Mad Maestro	
The News Theatre, Birmingham	23rd	Motor Cycling Stunting		The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	23rd
The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	30th	The Tatler Theatre, Chester	23rd	The Tatler Theatre, Chester	Sept. 6th
Egypt Eternal		My Little Chickadee		The Young in Heart	
The News Theatre, Bristol	Sept. 6th	The Tatler Theatre, Chester	30th	The Tatler Theatre, Leeds	Aug. 30th
Eyes on Brazil		Nice Work if you can do it		They Depend on Us	
The News Theatre, Leeds	Aug. 16th	The News Theatre, Leeds	16th	The News Cinema, Aberdeen	16th
Fire Chief		Our First Strength		This Island Paradise	
The News Theatre, Bristol	16th	The News Theatre, Birmingham	23rd	The News Cinema, Aberdeen	23rd
Fitness Wins		Private Life of a Bone		Three Comrades	
The News Cinema, Aberdeen	30th	The News Cinema, Aberdeen	30th	The Tatler Theatre, Leeds	23rd
Four Legged Lightning		Polling Day (Soviet)		Two Little Orphans	
The News Theatre, Aberdeen	30th	The News Cinema, Aberdeen	Sept. 6th	The News Cinema, Aberdeen	6th
Frills and Furbelows		Savoy in the Alps		Ulster	
The News Cinema, Aberdeen	16th	The Tatler Theatre, Chester	Aug. 30th	The Tatler Newsreel Theatre, Newcastle	16th
Going Places No. 83		Scotland Speaks		Utopia of Death	
The News Cinema, Aberdeen	30th	The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	23rd	The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	16th
Going Places No. 85		The News Theatre, Leeds	30th	The News Theatre, Leeds	30th
The News Cinema, Aberdeen	16th	Sea for Yourself		War Time Factory	
His Tale		The News Theatre, Leeds	16th	The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	Sept. 6th
The News Theatre, Bristol	16th	The Tatler Theatre, Chester	Sept. 6th	Water Babies	
The News Theatre, Leeds	16th	Sojourn in Havana		The News Cinema, Aberdeen	6th
Information Please		The News Theatre, Manchester	6th	Wedding Bells	
The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	23rd	Soviet—Sport		The Tatler Theatre, Chester	Aug. 30th
The News Theatre, Leeds	30th	The News Cinema, Aberdeen	Aug. 23rd	What's Your I.Q.?	
The News Theatre, Leeds	Sept. 6th	Speed Up		The Tatler Theatre, Chester	16th
Kentucky Royalty		The News Cinema, Aberdeen	Sept. 6th	You The People	
The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	Aug. 23rd	Stand In		The News Theatre, Leeds	23rd
The News Theatre, Leeds	30th	The Tatler Theatre, Leeds	16th		



# FILM OF THE MONTH

## FANTASIA

*Fantasia*. Produced by Walt Disney. *Commentator*: Deems Taylor. *Music* played by Stokowski and the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra. Recorded on R.C.A. In Technicolor.

Well here's *Fantasia* at last, with a loud blast on the trumpets and enough of what *Variety* calls pufferoo to get the poor old critics in such a state they don't know whether they're on their heads or their heels. These bright boys can understand and deal with a thing that is good, i.e. highbrow, and only worth a panning, or successful, i.e. middlebrow, and to be treated as Art, or popular i.e. lowbrow, and to be dismissed as vulgar. But when a man like Disney comes along and is good and successful and popular at the same time, they feel very much out of their depth and look around nervously for someone to tell them what they ought to say. As the Emperor found out with his new clothes, truth will out, and the plain truth is that *Fantasia*, in spite of one or two very nice things, is on the whole a large, gaudy, bright and expensive stinker.

Disney, like Chaplin and many another honest lad who started from nothing, has felt out of place in the drawing-room world of chandeliers and full evening dress and decided it was his duty to improve himself and go in for culture in a big way. So Frank Churchill, composer of *Who's afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?* and the *Snow White* songs, whose brilliant scores meant so much in vitality to the earlier Disneys, moves out in favour of the lion-maned Leopold Stokowski. Now Stokowski occupies much the same place in serious music that Henry Hall does in jazz—straight up-and-down stuff that couldn't hurt a fly, with hours spent in such world-shaking pursuits as transcribing Bach organ fugues for full orchestra. Disney would have been much better associated with a lively trouble-maker like Toscanini; but then there wouldn't have been any *Fantasia*. Toscanini enjoyed *The Band Concert* like anything, but I'd hate to be around when he saw *Fantasia*. Not that the music itself is bad: it's quite well-played and recorded. Unfortunately, we in England don't get a chance yet of hearing it with the full stereophonic battery of speakers and tracks; as shown over here it's a plain one-track re-recording with no special effects, except on Schubert's *Ave Maria* a pleasant feeling of spaciousness—probably done with an echo mike.

There is enough novelty about *Fantasia* for it to deserve to be called an experiment, but Disney, although well sold on culture himself, obviously felt that some pretty high-power salesmanship was necessary to put it over on the toiling masses. So the eight different pieces are each given introductions—of the orchestra tuning up and so on—and separated from each other, with a quarter of an hour interval in the middle of the film. This loose and unconventional construction, somewhat reminiscent of *One Hour With You*, has a pleasantly homely and intimate

quality about it. It also leads, after the interval whilst we're waiting for the conductor, to the shy appearance on the screen of the soundtrack, which gives us a visual recital of some of the instruments in the orchestra, the only really novel and imaginative use of sound and colour in the whole film. But more than to outweigh this, we get a fulsome commentator in complete evening dress (production value) who insists on explaining precisely what we're going to see before we see it. Also a horribly whimsical episode where the orchestra, the conductor-cat being away, break into a jam session, just to prove they're human too. On the whole though, this method of stringing the various pieces together is quite a successful breakaway from ordinary feature construction.

The eight pieces treated are Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, transcribed for orchestra, some of Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite, Dukas's Sorcerer's Apprentice, Stravinsky's Rite of Spring (these four make the first half) a part of Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony, Ponchielli's Dance of the Hours and, finally, Moussorgsky's Night on the Bald Mountain and Schubert's Ave Maria, done together. After the assembly of the orchestra and a spiel from Deems Taylor to the effect that the picture throughout is going to attempt a visual interpretation of the music, we swing into J. S. Bach. First of all, double exposures of the orchestra with their various instruments, then—'Why, whatever's this—dots and dashes and violin bows and lines running all over the place? Why, of course, our old pal Oscar Fischinger turned up eight years later with just the same old ideas. And such muddy, thick, dull colours too. Old Bach, with his clean lines and bright mathematical precision, would have had a fit. After this, the Nutcracker Suite, still treated as an interpretation of the music but done in patterns of falling leaves, flowers on the water and dancing toadstools, the colour a bit livelier but still no glimpse of any fusion of the picture with the music. And then, thank goodness, with the Sorcerer's Apprentice away goes all pretence of interpretation of the music; and for the rest of *Fantasia* we get honest straightforward storytelling, with the music no more than a background accompaniment. The Sorcerer's Apprentice is a good plain Mickey Mouse that could hold its own even with *Lonesome Ghosts*, with a magnificent array of watercarrying brooms in as good a climax as you could wish. Rite of Spring is an imaginative reconstruction of the coming of life to the earth and its development up to the fall of the dinosaurs, which could go straight out to the schools as an instructional. Peopled by protoplasm, tyrannosauri and pterodactyls, it somehow contrives to be oddly moving. After the interval we come to the Pastoral Symphony, about which the less said the better. It is Disney in his most nauseating

*Water Babies* vein, all coy and babies' bottoms, in a successful attempt to make life seem a very cheap and unpleasant business. Luckily, by this time you have forgotten all about the claim to be interpreting the music, and there is nothing to remind you that tough old Beethoven is supposed to be connected with it. Dance of the Hours, happily, is a take-off of the ballet; too long but pleasantly humorous, with cavorting ostriches, elephants, maidenly hippopotami and alligators. Finally, together, Night on the Bald Mountain and Ave Maria, told as the triumph of good over evil. Anyone who saw Alexieff and Parker's original about ten years ago will find this Night on the Bald Mountain, with its leaping devils and lost souls, pretty flat; whilst Ave Maria is as cheap and banal a piece as ever appeared outside a chocolate box lid. Long tracking shots through arches of trees, and an interminable procession of oranges across a gloomy landscape are accompanied by the respectful voices of an unseen choir, and find their fitting conclusion in a gaudy copper sun beaming brightly and hopefully from the heavens. And that's the end of the film.

Well, what are we to say about all this? As you will gather, there's some good straight ordinary Disney in the Sorcerer's Apprentice and Dance of the Hours, and some quite successful striking out in a new direction in the Rite of Spring. But taken as a whole *Fantasia* has a nasty smell about it. And the reason for this impression is the fact that Disney feels himself out of his element and is doing a bit of good old-fashioned crawling. Not only is he crawling to his audience, with his Pastoral Symphony and sleek commentator and whimsical orchestra, but he's also crawling to his conductor and composers, with his Ave Maria and Bach. Now any man who stands up straight and says what he has to say will earn respect, and to do him justice, Disney has usually before now come out straight and stood on his own feet, without pandering one way or the other. But this anxious concern for people's feelings and viewpoints, this careful classicism, this desire to have it both ways, will only make him unpopular everywhere. It was partly, no doubt, the fact that so much money was tied up in *Fantasia* that urged him to play safe: it would have been better in that case to try something out in a single reel where he could afford to cut his losses. Or did he really see himself as the great man, the wonder who could please everybody at once? In the old days Disney built himself up by his vitality and straight popular touch, when anybody who dived under a bed was greeted with the crash of shattered crockery, and opera singers were figures of fun. If he is going to aspire to the realms of middle-class near-culture, he'll have to count without the support of those of us who welcomed him from the first for his cheerful, self-sufficient, critical attitude and warm common touch, and forgave him a dozen *Water Babies* for one *Lonesome Ghosts*. In the end, the sad thing about *Fantasia* is that so much money, talent and good intentions should have been in labour for so long to produce such an insignificant middle-class mouse.



## NAVAL FILM UNIT

Reprinted by courtesy of the "Strand Magazine"

**We deeply regret to record that Sub-Lieutenant Pen Tennyson, who figures largely in this article, was killed recently in an air accident. He was easily the most promising of our younger studio directors, and his place will be very hard to fill.**

WITH OFFICERS AND RATINGS as actors, directors and technicians, the Navy is now making talking films in its own up-to-date studio somewhere on the South Coast.

Although the pictures are for instructional purposes and not for public exhibition, most of them are as efficiently produced and many are quite as entertaining as any professional production of a similar kind.

That may not be altogether surprising, for everybody knows that the Navy never does things by halves. But it may surprise many people to learn that the Silent Service has been making these talking pictures for many years without "shooting a line" about it.

The film studio is part of the Royal Naval School of Photography, where picked men are trained as specialists or "tradesmen" for camera work with the Fleet Air Arm and other branches of the Services. A qualified man is given the official status of photographer, and entitled to wear an embroidered badge of a camera in addition to his badge of rank.

Some time before the war the Director of Naval Training decided that the facilities of the cinematographic section of this school might well be utilised to make films of various naval subjects, from boat drill to firing a torpedo, for the instruction of recruits, cadets and officers. Most of the first productions were of a technical nature. Many were largely illustrated by animated diagrams—made on the cartoon principle—accompanied by running commentaries or lectures on the sound-track.

Soon after the outbreak of war, however, the Admiralty decided to extend the scope of the cinema as a means of speeding up training. Whereas in a practical lesson an instructor could show, perhaps, half a dozen men the right and wrong way to lower a boat or prepare a torpedo for launching, a film could demonstrate such processes in detail, with close-ups, slow-motion shots and diagrams, and with carefully-edited commentaries given by first-class instructors, to a large number of men at the same time. Moreover, the cinema could be used not only for explaining technical details, but for the training of ratings and officers in general subjects ranging from discipline to tactics.

In a short while the number of films scheduled for production was beyond the capacity of the Navy's own studio. It was decided, therefore, to contract with various civilian film producers to make some of the more simple pictures under official supervision and, at the same time, to expand the naval film unit in order to cope with productions of a more technical or more secret nature.

Among the simpler subjects in the programme was *A Day on a Battleship*, made for the purpose of teaching raw recruits the meaning of bells,

bugle calls and whistles, the various ranks of officers and petty officers, the duties and watches, and the general routine of the ship. Among the more advanced subjects was a film intended to teach officers the tricky job of guarding a convoy in the face of an enemy attack.

It was the latter film, entitled *Night Attack*, that was actually in production when I visited the studio recently. The unit engaged upon the making of the picture were all naval men, but every one of them had been a professional film-maker in civil life.

"That is one of the advantages of wartime expansion," said the producer, a Lieutenant of the R.N.V.R. who had been called back from duty on a minesweeper to take up similar work to that which he had performed for many years in a leading British film studio. "So many experienced film technicians and actors have joined the Service that we are now able to find first-class men for the principal jobs in the studio and to supplement them, where necessary, with fully-trained assistants who have been through the School of Photography here."

In the studio, part of the bridge of a destroyer had been built. On the bridge, wearing a thick "duffle-coat" with wooden buttons, and holding a large pair of binoculars, stood a keen-eyed officer.

"Isn't that Harold Warrender?" I asked.

"Lieutenant Warrender," the producer corrected. He belongs to H.M.S. *Ganges*, now. They've lent him to us for a few days. He used to get between twenty and thirty pounds a day for doing this sort of thing; now he has to do it for about twenty shillings!

"We have a good many other well-known actors to draw upon if they can be spared. There are Ralph Richardson and Laurence Olivier, both officers in the Fleet Air Arm; Robert Newton, who's an A.B.; and there are others in the Army and Air Force who would probably be released to help us if their services were needed. The Forces already lend each other their films, and no doubt would be willing to interchange actors in the same way."

"Quiet, please! Rehearsal!" came the voice of the director.

Turning, I saw that the slim young officer of the "Wavy Navy" crouching in front of the camera was Sub-Lieutenant Pen Tennyson, R.N.V.R., (a descendant of the poet), who directed that highly successful British film *Convoy*. By his side, surveying the scene through a blue glass, was a Lieutenant-Commander who, having retired from the Service as the result of a crash while serving in the Fleet Air Arm, had become one of our "ace" cameramen at the Beaconsfield Studios, and has now returned to his former rank in charge of the photographic section to the Admiralty.

"Clear the set, please!" commanded the assistant director, an ordinary seaman. A man in the uniform of a captain hastened to obey. I learned afterwards that he was, in fact, another seaman, formerly a professional actor in Australia, who had been given the "acting" rank of captain for a few hours to play his part in the film. In any case, it was obvious that rank did not count in this unit. One could only regard its members as a team of movie-makers.

As if to add to this Alice-in-Wonderland atmosphere, the officer on the bridge, at the command "Action", slowly turned his head and began an argument with another person who was not there, pausing between each sentence and reacting to an imaginary reply. Afterwards he took up the position of the invisible man, and assisted by a recording of his own voice reproduced through a loud speaker, proceeded to answer himself back, sentence by sentence.

The director noticed my puzzled expression and volunteered an explanation.

"In this picture, by trick photography and recording, we shall show two images of the same man actually talking to himself. You see, the film deals with the duties of an officer on a destroyer acting as escort to a convoy. In order to emphasise an important point, we show exactly what happens when the wrong action is taken. Then, in the final scene, we show the officer putting forward his excuses for taking that action, while his 'other self'—his conscience, if you like—answers each separate argument and clearly explains why he was at fault. Thus the lesson is first given in vivid pictorial form, and afterwards stressed by the argument at the end. We believe that, in certain cases, this somewhat unusual method is more likely to make a lasting impression on the minds of the audience than the introduction of a lecture or running commentary.

"We feel sure that well-written dialogue, convincing characterisation, and even an occasional touch of humour, can help considerably to arrest and retain the interest of the audience, which an illustrated technical lecture might fail to do in many cases.

"For this reason we are glad to be able to use the services of experienced screen writers, actors and technicians. Our Art Director, who designs the sets, was formerly employed in one of the leading film studios. For our lectures and commentaries we may be fortunate enough to have the services of such experts as Commander Anthony Kimmins and Commander Woodruffe.

"Of course, every word of the script is planned in close consultation with an expert in the subject it is intended to teach, but the actual presentation of the story on the screen is left to experts in film technique. As a senior officer said to one of the scenarists recently, 'Shoot the story as you think best, but mind that you make every point in a way that will stick in the memory.'"

No fewer than forty naval films are already available for instruction, and forty more are scheduled for early production. Each picture, on completion, is submitted to the scrutiny of senior officers, in a special projection theatre which has been installed at the Admiralty.



# PROPAGANDA AND THE ARMY

## BOOK REVIEW

News of film activities in the Army is sparse—an occasional press hand-out from the Public Relations Department of the War Office, or an occasional letter from a ranker asking what is happening or stating what isn't. It is not easy to assess the position. The speech made by Viscount Hinchinbrooke during the recent propaganda debate in the Commons is, therefore, a useful contribution towards public enlightenment on this question. The speech is reproduced hereunder by permission of the Controller, H.M.S.O.

"I HAVE COME straight from an infantry unit in the field force, with all the various and manifold duties that have there to be performed, and I have had no time for the careful composition of such a speech. I want to speak on only one aspect of propaganda, and I hope I shall not be out of order, for I understand that the Debate is to be a wide one. I want to speak on propaganda in the Army. It is no reflection on the Director of Public Relations at the War Office, who is doing excellent work in a rather different sphere, to say that the Army is neglecting propaganda—and by that I mean educational publicity—with consequent injury to its fighting efficiency. I mean publicity, not only for the public who support the Army with their high morale, but also for the Army, which in turn supports the morale of the public, by an exhibition of its strength and high standard of training. I wish to make a plea today for a far wider use of the normal, everyday processes and methods of publicity, and for its extension right down to the fighting units. I mean by that, reporting of exercises and operations, the use of still and motion-picture photography, posters, public address equipment, and the like. We ought to have publicity units, as part of the establishments of our battalions and regiments, to photograph and write about the troops on exercise and in the field.

"The Army is behind the other two Services in this respect. I recently went to a newsreel where was shown a composite picture of the work of the three fighting services. First of all, we had some views of the Navy, and we saw battleships in line ahead steaming through heavy seas and firing broadsides. That picture evoked a burst of applause from the audience. Then there was a picture of the Royal Air Force, and we saw a formation of bombers escorted by fighters, darting through clouds, with views of the sea and coastline far below. That picture produced an awe-inspired silence. Finally we came to the Army. We saw a company of infantry attacking a pill-box at the end of a village street, but I regret to say that the audience burst out laughing. It was not the fault of the Army; it was a manoeuvre well and efficiently performed, but the angle of photography was wrong. There were all sorts of grotesque and unnecessary scenes, including, for example, citizens putting up their umbrellas, dogs barking at the heels of soldiers, and perambulators scurrying across the street. From the civilian's point of view it was very funny, but it was not very funny from the military point of view. I submit that that sort of thing is very bad propaganda.

"What happens after military exercises have been held? The umpires' reports are collated, and

that takes several days. They are then passed down through the various formations, which takes several days more, and finally there is a post-mortem on the exercise within the unit itself. By that time the normal activities of the unit have continued and all interest has entirely evaporated. There is no time and there are no personnel to prepare a report within the unit, with the result that many valuable lessons are lost, and the same mistakes are repeated time and time again. We ought to have publicity men who are soldiers to photograph that unit on exercise, and the results ought to be made available within 48 hours. We ought to have publicity men, soldiers again, to co-operate with the umpires and write reports to form the basis of subsequent criticism. In actual operations these men would send reports and films back through the various formations to general headquarters, and by air to this country for the edification of the Government and the military authorities, and, after suitable editing, for the information of the public. It is true that training films exist, but I have seen only two since the war began—I hope I am an exception in that. It is true that photographic apparatus exists, although I know of one case where a cinema projector was found lying idle in an ordnance depot. It took all the ingenuity of a resourceful officer to have it extracted. The whole process of getting films and photographs to the troops, and from the troops to the public, is too difficult and too complicated. Front-line units pine for these films to help them in this training. The public long for them to show them what their soldiers are doing. Units should not have to grab at meagre resources; a copious supply should be foisted upon them. The Government are seemingly unaware of the enormous part which the cinema plays in the lives of the younger generation, and soldiers are no exception to that rule. The Government are seemingly unaware of the great hold the cinema has, and of its power to educate and train. The eye is a surer instructor than the ear, and good publicity methods in this direction will bear wholesome fruit.

"We have a long way to go before we reach the standard of publicity which has been attained by other fighting services in the world. It is a strange thing that we have allowed so many weapons which we invented in the last war to grow dull and rusty in this war. Propaganda, in particular, needs a proper polish, and I hope the Minister, who should delegate his powers in this as in other branches, rather than concentrate them in himself, will see that the necessary elbow grease is applied in the next few months, even if it is only in this one direction which I have been able to mention to-day."

*Cine-Biology*. J. V. Durden, Mary Field and F. Percy Smith. Published by Penguin Books Ltd., in the Pelican Series; price sixpence.

THE first thing which makes this book of interest and importance is the fact that it should have been produced in wartime. The second is that it should have been based on such unique experience as the three authors', who for many years have been associated with the film series so well-known as "Secrets of Nature" and "Secrets of Life".

*Cine-Biology* is an outline of biology intended for the lay reader. It explains the classification of life adopted by international science and it takes in detail those established examples, which, in sequence, step out the path of evolution. Most of these organisms, such as the Amoeba, the Sea Urchin, etc., have formed the subject-matter for films already made by the authors; and, consequently, the book is the richer, not only for some admirable illustrations taken from these films, but for the many valuable hints for practical study, which are the result of long and intimate hours spent in coaxing the right reactions from unreasoning creatures.

Anyone who has ever tried to film any sort of non-human life will realise how much of an unusual nature can be revealed in this way. If the facts gained thereby do not add exactly to fundamental scientific knowledge, they do at least give a new and refreshing aspect to the study of biology. And it is this liveliness which the authors have succeeded in conveying to the reader.

For the lay reader, however, one feels that the text could have been both shorter and simpler. Where the authors are happiest is in describing their filming; where they are unhappiest is in the occasional intrusion of a kind of uncle-ish false gaiety which is possibly born of a still-not-quite-satisfied feeling about the amount of scientific matter the public can digest at one swallow. The same influence can be heard in the "Secrets of Life" subjects themselves. It is a pity, too, that the excellent illustrations, most of the actuality scenes of which are attributable to the unique photography of F. Percy Smith, are not in every case related to the captions. This is noticeable in the pages showing the metamorphosis of the dragon-fly. But these are minor points in a vastly interesting book.

Indeed, that it should have been possible to publish this book just now for a series which depends for its success on mass-sales, is evidence of an encouraging faith in the intelligent interest of the general public. It is also a useful reminder to those of us wholly concerned with war-work of the way in which, in the midst of war, the world of science presses forward irresistibly with its work for peace.

The book is dedicated to Harry Bruce Woolfe commemorating twenty-one years of the two series, "Secrets of Nature" and "Secrets of Life", which he has produced so successfully.



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# U.S. OPINION ON BRITISH DOCUMENTARIES

The U.S. paper *Variety*—under the headline "British War Documentaries, Good Model for U.S. Picture Propaganda"—and the magazine *Time*, review some recent M.O.I. releases.

*Variety* says:—

NEW YORK'S MUSEUM of Modern Art Film Library is presently offering 15 recent documentaries from England as part of its exhibition of "The Art of Britain at War".

Remarkable part about these documentary subjects is that the high technical quality has been maintained.

Six pictures in this group give a grimly realistic summary of Britain going along with its normal duties while looking after neighbours who have lost their homes by bombing, caring for the nation's health in war-time, the stoicism of those stationed at the Dover coastal defence line, the work of the Royal Air Force, and the strenuous task confronting the average housewife during the present conflict. Something of the Britisher's grit and calm under all circumstances pervades each subject. American producers of defence films may well profit from seeing the entire 15 subjects because, undoubtedly, they represent the Ministry of Information propaganda effort at its peak of efficiency. It is the sort of propaganda which is most effectual because so smartly executed, and as such, hardly falls into the present-day accepted category of blatant "pufferoo". In the event of greater war emergency, the British "information" tactics may well be copied by the United States, which is fast realising the growing need for such a service.

*Neighbours Under Fire*, by Strand Films, gives a grim close-up of what occurs in a typical English village after it has been bombed by the Germans. Central figure in all activities is a helmeted minister. Final scene shows a crowded air-raid shelter with hundreds peacefully sleeping as the muffled thunder of air raiders barely seeps in from above. Narrator emphasises the "one big family" idea.

G.P.O. film unit contrasts the war against disease in normal times with what has been happening under the Nazis' constant strafing from the air in *Health in War* subject. Film details how the sick, infirm, helpless and children were moved away from London when the bombings began.

Possibly the most dramatic film of group is *Dover Front Line*, also by G.P.O. Narrator stresses the point that everything is quite all right at Dover despite bombardment from the French channel ports, and continued air attacks, obviously covering the three-month period ending last September 15. Shows cinemas, roller skating rinks and all business going forward as usual. Film interviews typical residents, with the "thumbs-up" spirit in evidence, from the small child on up to the officer in charge of an anti-aircraft unit. Actual scenes of bombing of a convoy going through the Dover straits, dog fights in the sky, attacks on the balloon protec-

tion rings, and anti-aircraft batteries in action heighten the short.

*Air Communiqué* shows how scores are reckoned in air fights. Besides laying stress on the R.A.F. method of checking Nazi plane casualties, the film is intensely interesting in actual air-fighting scenes. Producer shrewdly has taken September 15 as a big day in the British effort to thwart German raider planes with the tally "185 planes downed" on that date.

How those who serve at home have as difficult a task as the munitions' worker, the soldier on duty or the office worker carrying-on despite the war, is the thesis for *They Also Serve*, produced by Realist Films. The dawn-to-nightfall activities in a typical two-day period of the average housewife are employed to punch home this message. Short comes closest to being a theatrical production of the lot.

*Musical Poster No. 1*, designed and directed by Len Lye, is a fantastic but effective blending of colour-effects and sound to draw audience interest to a warning to the public. This message is contained in printed bold titles carrying out the idea to be careful, "the enemy is listening to you, what you do, where you live, where you work." Short runs less than three minutes but is highly effective in cautioning the average citizen not to give enemy any information, carelessly or inadvertently.

*Time* says:—

Manhattan's Museum of Modern Art has been showing 15 of Britain's documentary war films to small though ardent daily audiences. Intended to convey specific wartime advice entertainingly to the home population, they deal with such subjects as the dangers of gossip, the activities of the Home Guard, how the R.A.F. keeps its score of downed Nazi planes, etc. They are on view in Manhattan strictly as examples of cinema art.

Why the British Government considers them unfit for national U.S. distribution is another British propaganda mystery. Acted for the most part by the ordinary, everyday citizens of England with the assistance of an occasional pro., they reveal without exaggeration or undue flag-waving a nation grimly going about the business of fighting for its life.

Best of the lot is *Spring Offensive*, a two-reeler designed to acquaint the British countryside with the reasons for and methods of ploughing—under 10 per cent of the nation's grassland for food crops. It is an almost perfect example of the high technical quality and emotional drive of the artfully made documentary.

*Spring Offensive* opens with a cast of East Anglian farmers and tradesmen organising their local government for the land reclamation task.

With the homely talk of people transacting their everyday affairs, they plan their campaign, put it into action. The rest of the tale is told through the eyes of a small boy evacuated from the city. He sees one old farm, gone to pot since World War I, rehabilitated with the aid of pooled machinery and labour. He learns that there must be no more of this business of farming the land properly only in wartime.

The other documentaries, except a few which use professional actors to play a specific incident (e.g., a re-enacted journey to Dunkirk and back in a small motor-boat), faithfully follow the method of *Spring Offensive*. One, *Squadron 992*, takes a balloon-barrage crew through its organization and training to its ultimate destination in Scotland to protect the Firth of Forth Bridge. Another, *Village School*, is a heart-warming account of a day in the life of a country school-teacher plagued with an overload of local and evacuee pupils.

Although all of the documentaries are grim reminders of the tragic significance of the war of Britain not one is without its leavening of dry humour. There is a lift to the way a Dover anti-aircraftman dismisses the daily shelling by Nazi big guns across the Channel. Says he: "Aye, we see a flash, count 60, and there she is."

There is a sense of the sanctity of the British home in the way a housewife holds the military at bay while remarking incredulously to her husband inside: "Here's a man wants to put a balloon in the back yard." And there is a suspicion of an ancient animosity in a Scottish soldier's reply to the hungry query of his newly-arrived comrades from London: "No. No haggis. They're breedin'."

## PUDOVKIN SPEAKS TO GERMANY

A Radio Talk in German by the Soviet Film Producer, Pudovkin

"I HAVE always honoured the great German scientists and composers. Before Hitler came to power I spent some time in Germany and met many producers, writers and actors. I cannot believe that either they, or the workers' families whom I knew, wish to destroy everything of value. A handful of criminals who fan the cruellest instincts have seized power in Germany and are clinging to it. But the bestial song of Fascism is coming to an end and its sources of supply are giving out.

"I do not carry a rifle yet; I am still a film producer. I want my films to hit the enemy just as our artillery does. I am proud to be one of the 200,000,000 Soviet citizens who have created an army of spiritual strength and with perfect technical equipment which will serve in the victory of culture over barbarism. The powerful fist of the Soviet people is dealing Fascism one blow after the other, each harder than the one before. The German people themselves must put an end to the bloody scum which has been forced upon them. Everything true and rational in the world must join in the sacred fight against Fascism."



## FILM LIBRARIES

Borrowers of films are asked to apply as much in advance as possible, to give alternative booking dates, and to return the films immediately after use. H. A hire charge is made.

F. Free distribution. Sd. Sound. St. Silent.

**Association of Scientific Workers**, 30 Bedford Row, W.C.1. Scientific Film Committee. *Graded List of Films*. A list of scientific films from many sources, classified and graded for various types of audience. On request, Committee will give advice on programme make-up and choice of films.

**Austin Film Library**. 24 films of motoring interest, industrial, technical and travel. Available only from the *Educational Films Bureau*, Tring, Herts. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

**Australian Trade Publicity Film Library**. 18 films of Australian life and scenery. Available from the *Empire Film Library*. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F. 3, sound films on 9.5 mm. available from *Pathescope*.

**British Commercial Gas Association**, Gas Industry House, 1 Grosvenor Place, S.W.1. Films on social subjects, domestic science, manufacture of gas. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & a few St. F.

**British Council Film Department**, 25 Saville Row, W.1. *Films of Britain*, 1940. Catalogue for overseas use only but provides useful synopses of 100 sound and silent documentary films.

**British Film Institute**, 4 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1. (a) *National Film Library Loan Section* to stimulate film appreciation by making available copies of film classics. 35 mm., 16mm. Sd. & St. H. (b) *Collection of Educational Films*. The Institute has a small collection of educational films not available from other sources. 35 mm., 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

**British Instructional Films**, 111 Wardour Street, W.1. Feature films; Pathé Gazettes and Pathetones; a good collection of nature films. A new catalogue is in preparation. 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

**Canadian Pacific Film Library**. 15 films of Canadian life and scenery. Available from the *Empire Film Library*. 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

**Canadian Government Exhibitions and Publicity**. A wide variety of films. Available from the *Empire Film Library*.

**Central Council for Health Education**. Catalogue of some 250 films, mostly of a specialist health nature, dealing with Diphtheria, Housing, Maternity, Child Welfare, Personal Hygiene, Prevention of Diseases, Physical Fitness, etc. Most films produced by societies affiliated to the Council, or on loan from other 16 mm. distributors (e.g. B.C.G.A.). Six films produced direct for the Council also available, including *Fear and Peter Brown*, *Carry on Children*, and *Breath of Danger*.

35 mm. and 16 mm. Sd. and St. H. and F.

**Central Film Library**, Imperial Institute, S.W.7. Has absorbed the *Empire Film Library* and the *G.P.O. Film Library*. Also contains all new M.O.I. non-theatrical films. No general catalogue yet issued. A hand list of M.O.I. films is available. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

**Coal Utilisation Joint Council**, General Buildings, Aldwych, London, W.C.2. Films on production of British coal and miners' welfare. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. F.

**Crookes' Laboratories**, Gorst Road, Park Royal, N.W.10. *Colloids in Medicine*. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. F.

**Dartington Hall Film Unit**, Totnes, South Devon. Classroom films on regional and economic geography. 16 mm. St. H.

**Dominion of New Zealand Film Library**. 415 Strand, W.C.2. 22 films of industry, scenery and sport. Includes several films about the Maoris. 16 mm. St. F.

**Educational Films Bureau**, Tring, Herts. A selection of all types of film. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

**Educational General Services**, 37 Golden Square, W.1. A wide selection of films, particularly of overseas interest. Some prints for sale. 16 mm. & St. H.

**Electrical Development Association**, 2 Savoy Hill, Strand, W.C.2. Four films of electrical interest. Further films of direct advertising appeal are available to members of the Association only. 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

**Empire Film Library**. Films primarily of Empire interest, with a useful subject index. Now merged with the *Central Film Library*. 16 mm. and a few 35 mm. Sd. & St. F.

**Film Centre**, 34 Soho Square, W.1. *Mouvements Vibratoires*. A film on simple harmonic motion. French captions. 35 mm. & 16 mm. St. H.

**Ford Film Library**, Dagenham, Essex. Some 50 films of travel, engineering, scientific and comedy interest. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

**Gaumont-British Equipments**, Film House, Wardour Street, W.1. Many films on scientific subjects, geography, hygiene, history, language, natural history, sport. Also feature films. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

**G.P.O. Film Library**. Over 100 films, mostly centred round communications. Now merged with the *Central Film Library*. 35 mm., 16mm. Sd. & St. F.

**Kodak, Ltd.**, Kingsway, W.C.2. (a) *Kodascope Library*. Instructional, documentary, feature, western, comedy. Strong on early American comedies. 16 mm. & 8 mm. St. H. (A separate *List of Educational Films*, extracted from the above, is also published. A number of films have teaching notes.) (b) *Medical Film Library*. Circulation restricted to members of medical profession. Some colour films. Some prints for outright sale. 16 mm. St. H.

**March of Time**, Dean House, 4 Dean Street, W.1. Selected *March of Time* items, including *Inside Nazi Germany*, *Battle Fleets of Britain*, *Canada at War*. 16 mm. Sd. H.

**Mathematical Films**. Available from B. G. D. Salt, 5 Carlingford Road, Hampstead, N.W.3. Five mathematical films suitable for senior classes. 16 mm. & 9.5 mm. St. H.

**Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Co., Ltd.**, Trafford Park, Manchester 17. *Planned Electrification*, a film on the electrification of the winding and surface gear in a coal mine. Available for showing to technical and educational groups. 16 mm. Sd. F.

**Ministry of Food Film Library**, Neville House, Page Street, S.W.1, or from District Officers. 23 films mostly on cooking, nutrition and kindred subjects. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

**Pathescope**, North Circular Road, Cricklewood, N.W.2. Wide selection of silent films, including cartoons, comedies, drama, documentary, travel, sport. Also good selection of early American and German films. 9.5 mm. Sd. & St. H.

**Petroleum Films Bureau**, 15 Hay Hill, Berkeley Square, W.1. Some 25 technical and documentary films. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

**Religious Film Library**, Church Walk, Duntable, Beds. Films of religious and temperance appeal. Also list of supporting films from other sources. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

**Scottish Central Film Library**, 2 Newton Place, Charing Cross, Glasgow, C.3. A wide selection of teaching films from many sources. Contains some silent Scots films not listed elsewhere. Library available to groups in Scotland only. 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

**Sound-Film Services**, 27 Charles Street, Cardiff. Library of selected films including Massingham's *And So to Work*. *Rome* and *Sahara* have French commentaries. 16 mm. Sd. H.

**South African Railways Publicity and Travel Bureau**, South Africa House, Trafalgar Square, W.C.2. 10 films of travel and general interest. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & 4 St. versions. F.

**Southern Railway**, General Manager's Office, Waterloo Station, S.E.1. Seven films (one in colour) including *Building an Electric Coach*, *South African Fruit* (Southampton Docks to Covent Garden), and films on seaside towns. 16 mm. St. F.

**Wallace Heaton, Ltd.**, 127 New Bond Street, W.1. Three catalogues. Sound 16 mm., silent 16 mm., silent 9.5 mm. Sound catalogue contains number of American feature films, including *Thunder Over Mexico*, and some shorts. Silent 16 mm. catalogue contains first-class list of early American, German and Russian features and shorts. 9.5 catalogue has number of early German films and wide selection of early American and English slapstick comedies. 16 mm. & 9.5 mm. Sd. & St. H.

**Workers' Film Association**, 145 Wardour Street, W.1. Films of democratic and co-operative interest. Notes and suggestions for complete programmes. Some prints for sale. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.



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